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Hello, students. My name is Dr. Martina Shabram. And I will be your instructor for today's lesson. I'm genuinely excited to teach you these concepts. So let's get started.

Today we're going to talk more about how the form and function of a piece of text is influenced by its purpose and its audience. We'll look at word choice, formality, and sentence structure to see how they are influenced by and attempt to influence the text's audience in order to meet its purpose.

So when you produce a piece of text, you're doing it for a reason, right. Writing always has a purpose or a goal and an audience. And those two factors will strongly influence the kind of language you choose in your writing. You generally want to make language choices that help your audience to understand your text and also that help you meet your goal for that text.

In this way, you'll want to pay attention to a few facets of your language, to your vocabulary level, to the connotations and denotations of the words you choose, to the degree of formality, and to the complexity or simplicity of your sentence structures.

So let's talk about the ways we can navigate those challenges in our writing. We'll start by thinking about the words we choose and the ways we choose them. When we talk about word choice, we're referring simply to which words you choose in your writing. Thinking about words and choosing them carefully is one of the hallmarks of a good writer and can help your writing be more effective and successful.

So words do a lot of work for us and they do a lot of work on our readers. So we want to be careful to select the best words we can to help our readers understand us and have the kind of responses that we're aiming for.

There are a few aspects of word choice to think about. There are many different ways to say something and thus many different vocabularies we can choose for any situation. And we want to think about what our audience is going to be able to understand best.

So let's say we're trying to argue that a peanut butter and jelly sandwich is a great lunch for students. How will our description change based on the audience? Let's imagine that the audience is a group of nutritionists. We can expect that scientists will be highly educated and have a high degree of technical knowledge.

So if we're trying to argue for the PB&J with this audience, we might use technical language such as-- we used a lot of technical words and assumed that our audience would understand some pretty scientific concepts. We also used unemotional language and didn't focus on the experience of eating the PB&J.

Now let's imagine that our audience is, instead, a group of parents. They might have varying educational levels

and technical knowledge. But we can't assume that they have the same knowledge that the nutritionists do. So we might instead be more general and less technical.

What's different? Here, we see we swapped the nutritional science for a more general explanation using language like unhealthy. And notice also that there is more emotive language here. Overloading and nourishing have more feeling than the drier concept of satiety.

Now let's say we're making this pitch to the school board. Well, we can again expect that our readers are intelligent but not scientists. See here how the language is more fact based, again. And also, how does the vocabulary of nutritional needs compare to nourished and satisfied or to satiety? These vocabulary choices are all contingent upon the audience. So the audience is really going to change the kinds of words we use to make the same argument.

So let's think now more specifically about words. Even when you select the words that mean the right thing, you want to also think about what they imply. This is the difference between denotation and connotation.

Denotation is the literal meaning of a word, what the dictionary says about it. Connotation, on the other hand, is the associative meaning of the word, what that word commonly implies or suggests. You might choose a word that has the correct denotative meaning but creates connotations that don't match your style or purpose, something that makes your audience think what you don't want them to think.

Some words have strong emotional connotations, which can be both a pitfall and an opportunity. Knowing how to use both denotation and connotation can lead to rich and interesting sentences with evocative combinations of words.

Let's explore. When we describe something as awesome, we're describing something almost godlike. We literally mean that it fills us with awe, that we are overwhelmed by reverence and even fear. Yet I know I've described particularly good lattes as awesome. So the meaning has shifted over time and awesome now connotes really good.

Technically, this means zealous or even obsessive. Yet how many times have you heard someone describe themselves as fanatical about a popular band or sports team. Though the denotation can be negative, the connotation has softened over time. But again, we would want to be careful if we used it because the term may still be used negatively to describe fans.

This is a tough one. The word retard technically means to delay or slow down the progress of. It's a verb. But it has come in some parts of the world, including the US, to be an offensive term describing someone with cognitive

or mental disability. It's considered to be a slur.

So the word's connotation and its denotation might come to have very different meanings. And that might require us to be very careful about our word choice. How about some that have similar meanings but connote very different things?

How will the meaning of a sentence change when we change between the words-- each of these has a different value judgement and even political or legal implications. So our use of each might signify a particular ideology.

OK, what about the difference between-- I know that being called curious might bring to mind Curious George, whereas nosy might bring to mind a negative character. So see how words bring up a host of different meanings. We understand how essential it is to pick the best words we can.

Well, now let's think about how to put those words together. How do we signal different degrees of formality in our writing? The level of formality you pick by the rules you follow and how strictly you adhere to them will be based on what your audience needs, what the purpose of your text is, and what your subject matter is.

Each of those factors will influence how formal or informal you need to be. So if you're writing for a personal audience, you can be informal. Whereas, if you're writing for an academic or professional audience, you'll likely need to be more formal.

In the case of the latter, you'll want to avoid using I and you in your writing. You'll pick a more sophisticated vocabulary, you'll temper the emotion of the text, and you will likely not include yourself directly in the content.

In the former, you can be much more personally focused and emotional. You can use a casual vocabulary, including slang and contractions. And you can break many rules of grammar for stylistic effect. If you really want, you can use emoticons and exuberant exclamation points to be more friendly and approachable.

So let's practice. Here are two very short pieces of writing. Each has a similar subject matter but is directed to a different audience with a different level of formality. This one here, obviously casual. And this one, fairly formal.

So notice the way they differ not just in the vocabulary they choose, but also in their structure. As I alluded to in the last example, the structure of our sentences is often quite different depending on the audience that we choose. As you write and assess your purpose and audience, then, it's wise to look not just at each individual word, but also to the way those words are put together in sentences.

In formal writing, longer, more complex sentences are common and even necessary. In contrast, informal writing often features shorter and simpler sentences. Writing that is very engaging and enjoyable to read almost always

includes a variety of sentence lengths and structures. But the particular ratio you use of long to short and complex to simple will depend on the audience and purpose.

Here's an example. Take a moment to read and feel free to pause until you're done. This piece uses very complicated sentences and a lot of words. Some readers may enjoy this style, while others may feel like the author is being pretentious because this is pretty overly complex. These lengthy, complex sentences raise this simple topic to a high level of formality, resulting in a paragraph that feels a little absurd.

Here's another passage. Again, take your time and read it at your own pace. So how does this compare to the previous example? In this one, everything is very short and simple. While this is a nice change from the last one, it may be too easy.

Some readers may feel like the author is a little condescending because this is so simplistic. And others may feel that it doesn't really match the content. Perhaps too much simplicity in the sentence structure will seem to contradict that message. Obviously, these two pieces each cover the same material, but to very different effect.

So what did we cover today. This lesson discussed the ways that our audience and purpose interact with the language we use. Specifically, we thought about the influence of word choice, which includes our vocabulary and its connotations and denotations, the level of formality we use, and our sentence structure.

Well, students, I hope you had as much fun as I did. Thank you.